

**NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE**  
Office of Archives and History  
Department of Cultural Resources

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**Rock Cliff Farm**

Wake Forest vicinity, Wake County, WA2258, Listed 8/29/2007  
Nomination by Davyd Foard Hood  
Photographs by Davyd Foard Hood, September 2005



B. W. Wells House, side view



Studio and office building

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of property

historic name Rock Cliff Farm

other names/site number Wells, B. W., Farm

2. Location

street & number At west end of Bent Road (SR 1919) N/A not for publication     

city or town Wake Forest vicinity X

state North Carolina code NC county Wake code 183 zip code 27587

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this      nomination      request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property      meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant      nationally X statewide      locally. (      See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property X meets      does not meet the National Register criteria. (      See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

     entered in the National Register

     See continuation sheet.

     determined eligible for the

National Register

     See continuation sheet.

     determined not eligible for the

National Register

     removed from the National Register

Rock Cliff Farm  
Name of Property

Wake County, North Carolina  
County and State

\_\_\_\_ other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

\_\_\_\_ private  
\_\_\_\_ public-local  
\_\_\_\_ public-State  
X public-Federal

### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

\_\_\_\_ building(s)  
X district  
\_\_\_\_ site  
\_\_\_\_ structure  
\_\_\_\_ object

### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>5</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>8</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

### Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC/single dwelling Sub: \_\_\_\_\_  
DOMESTIC/secondary structure \_\_\_\_\_  
FUNERARY/cemetery \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: VACANT/NOT IN USE Sub: \_\_\_\_\_  
FUNERARY/cemetery \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: triple-A house  
Other: half dovetail log meathouse  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone  
roof Metal  
walls Wood  
Log  
other Stone  
Brick

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) See continuation sheet.

Rock Cliff Farm  
Name of Property

Wake County, North Carolina  
County and State

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

☒ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☐ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ B removed from its original location.

☐ C a birthplace or a grave.

☐ D a cemetery.

☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ F a commemorative property.

☒ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

(Enter categories from instructions)

Conservation

Science

Literature

### Period of Significance

1950-1978

### Significant Dates

1950

1954

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Wells, Bertram Whittier

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

**Architect/Builder** Wells, Bertram Whittier--builder

## Areas of Significance

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS)

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

☐ previously listed in the National Register

☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register

☐ designated a National Historic Landmark

☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary Location of Additional Data

☒ State Historic Preservation Office

☐ Other State agency

☐ Federal agency

☐ Local government

☒ University

☐ Other

Name of repository: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina

Rock Cliff Farm

Name of Property

Wake County, North Carolina

County and State

North Carolina State University Libraries' Special Collection Research Center, North Carolina State Univ., Raleigh, NC

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## 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property** 83.442

**UTM References** (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing  
1 17 711730 3986400  
2 17 712190 3986890

Zone Easting Northing  
3 17 712520 3986500  
4 17 712530 3986070  
X See continuation sheet.

## Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

## Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Davyd Foard Hood

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date 7 July 2006

street & number Isinglass, 6907 Old Shelby Road telephone 704/462-1847

city or town Vale state NC zip code 28168

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## 12. Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

### Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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## Property Owner

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name See continuation sheet

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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7. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Rock Cliff Farm, the retirement home of Bertram Whittier Wells, is located in northern Wake County, about fifteen and a half miles north of the North Carolina Capitol, and about midway between the towns of Wake Forest and Durham. The farm lies about four miles west of the boundary between Wake and Durham counties and in a once-remote part of Wake County near its shared borders with both Durham and Granville counties. This area, watered by streams feeding into the Neuse River, was historically occupied by farmers of relatively modest means who held smaller acreages, and some few larger holdings that could be described as plantations. Historically, and to the present, much of this gently rolling area was wooded, with small fields cleared for raising crops. The small farm, comprising 144.20 acres, acquired by Dr. Wells in 1950, was typical of the area; however, it was exceptional in its location at the end of a peninsula and largely encircled by a bend of the Neuse River. It was its location, the stone cliff at the edge of the river known historically as Ezekiel Rock and by Dr. Wells as Zeagle's Rock, and the flora of the holding that appealed to Dr. Wells.

These features and the sense of remove from the intrusions of the modern world survive today at Rock Cliff Farm on its residual tract of 83.442 acres. However, the appearance of the Neuse River and its embrace of Rock Cliff Farm has evolved. These changes were set in motion with the Congressional passage of the Flood Control Act of 1965 which authorized the construction of a dam on the Neuse River and the creation of Falls Lake. The project advanced through the late 1960s and 1970s, and it was not until 1983, five years after Dr. Wells' death, that the impoundment of the Neuse River flooded the low-lying lands of Rock Cliff Farm. Now, twenty-four years later, the residual acreage of Rock Cliff Farm lies in the embrace of a wider waterway that feeds into Falls Lake, which now covers a part of the Wake/Durham County boundary.

While owned by the Federal government, Rock Cliff Farm is part of a large acreage managed by the State of North Carolina as the Falls Lake State Recreation Area. Its boundary effectively merges with that of the adjoining forested parkland. Since 1982 the complex of buildings at the core of Rock Cliff Farm have enjoyed the support of the B. W. Wells Association. To further its educational and preservation goals, the association has marked the trails on the property with simple signs and erected a number of unobtrusive, small informational signs about the grounds of the house occupied by Dr. Wells from 1954 until his death in 1978. These interpretative initiatives in no way affect the integrity of the site. While the impoundment of the Neuse River has reduced the acreage of Rock Cliff Farm by about sixty acres, the residual core of the farm, the site and setting of the buildings in which Dr. Wells made his home during the last twenty-four years of his life, remains intact and retains its strong, visual and physical associations with the author of *The Natural Gardens of North Carolina*.

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Note: The following description of the Grounds of Rock Cliff Farm (#1), a contributing site, constitutes the summary overview of the nominated acreage and the effective introduction to the inventory list. For convenience and ease of description, the buildings and other resources, most of which stand slightly askew of a true cardinal point axis, are described as if they did, using the closest relationship to a cardinal point as the base point. For example, the original façade of the Ray-Wells House (#2), which faces east/northeast, is described as the east elevation, and so forth.

Inventory List

1. The Grounds of Rock Cliff Farm  
ca. 1903 to the present  
Contributing site

The grounds of Rock Cliff Farm, constituting 83.442 acres and comprising the nominated acreage, reflect important aspects of the history of the property. These grounds are the residual tract, surviving above the water line of Falls Lake, of the 144.20-acre farm that Charles J. Ray purchased from the estate of his father-in-law in 1903 and that Bertram Whittier Wells purchased in December 1950 and where he made his home from 1954 until his death in 1978. The site map of Rock Cliff Farm and the USGS map included in this submission show that virtually all of the acreage is woodland except for the narrow path of the farm road, leading west along a ridge line off the west end of Bent Road, the cleared path of the utility right of way, carrying on a generally east/west axis across the peninsula, and the elongated grass-covered clearing in which are located the Ray-Wells House (#2) and its nearby resources (#3-7) and the secondary Ray House (#8) and its outbuilding (#9). Except for the historic deed line, which bisects the peninsula in the woodland, the boundary of the grounds and the nominated acreage is the shoreline of Falls Lake. In short, about ninety percent of the property is surrounded by the waters of Falls Lake.

The Grounds of Rock Cliff Farm represent three critical aspects of the property's history in both natural and man-made features. The history of the property as a small subsistence farm, cultivated by Charles J. Ray, is reflected in the buildings and their relationship to each other at the farm seat and at the secondary domestic compound. Both of these house grounds occupy high points on the peninsula from which the ground drops gently down to the lake edge which covers the once productive bottomlands along the Neuse River. Except for occasional flowering ornamental shrubs and a fig bush, most of which were probably planted since 1950, the Ray family made few surviving ornamental enhancements to the grounds of the houses. However, they did leave two other marks on the land and the landscape. At points in the present-day woodland, which includes both traditional woodlands and volunteer growth in grown-over fields, traces of Mangum terracing, which preserved the farm's hillside fields from erosion, can be

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discerned as shallow, rhythmic undulations in the woodland floor. These terrace traces are the only features of Mr. Ray's agricultural fields to survive. The woodlands themselves reflect choices which Mr. Ray made. Being able to gain relatively little profit from his farming, Mr. Ray executed timber deeds in 1920 and 1937 for major parts of his farm which effectively resulted in the cutting and removal of most of the trees on the nominated acreage, beyond the house yards, that were standing prior to about 1900. The 1920 deed concerned "all merchantable timber that will measure 8 inches in diameter 12 inches above the ground" on about seventy-five of Mr. Ray's 144 acres, and the 1937 deed allowed the removal of "all the timber" on a specified tract of the farm.

The natural landscape of Rock Cliff Farm is what drew Bertram Whittier Wells and his wife to the property and the chief factor in their decision to make its existing buildings and grounds their retirement home. After relocating to the farm in 1954 Mr. Wells undertook a botanical survey of Rock Cliff Farm and published a short account of his findings under the title "The Flora of One-Hundred and Fifty Acres" in the *North Carolina Wild Flower Preservation Society Newsletter* in April 1961.

From our home the land slopes to the river in every direction except to the east from which direction the dead-end road enters. All the old cotton fields on the upper slopes are now in tall pines and the hardwoods on the north slope and river flood plain approach the size of virgin forest trees. Such topography presents great diversity in habitat with its correlated diversity of vegetation.

My list of plants on the 150 acres now numbers 521 species. Only self-maintaining types are included. Of these 51 are trees, 34 are shrubs and 21 are vines. Some 21 ferns and 50 grasses have been recorded.

Now to come to the major interest of the Society, wild flowers! No two plant-lovers could ever agree as to what is and what is not a "wild flower." A botanist will naturally choose the generous concept and include every species exhibiting a colorful corolla, large or small, for they are all beautiful and of great scientific interest. Thus guided, my list of wild flowers comes to 320, and all of these are herbs.

Perhaps the most unique feature of our tree farm is formed by the rock cliffs which front on the river for an eighth of a mile. These are 50-70 feet high and at one point a projecting ledge extends halfway over the water. This 55-foot lookout is known as Zeagles rock, a name given from a century old suicide jump which occurred here. These are believed to be the only vertical hard rock cliffs on the

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entire river. On these rocks many interesting plants are to be seen. The rock-ledge lip fern (*Cheilanthes*) is represented in quantity along with a small, very attractive stonecrop (*Sedum nevii*). On ledges with adequate soil, the Virginia saxifrage is abundant and accompanied here and there by the brilliant fire-pink. In contrast on the talus at the base of the cliffs, an area covered with water at flood time, most unexpectedly one finds luxuriant jack-the-pulpits.

Today, when most of the rock cliff is submerged in Falls Lake, Zeagle's Rock remains an appealing point of interest to both visitors to Rock Cliff Farm and to boaters on the lake. (Mr. Wells' identification of the landmark as "Zeagles rock" represents an elision of "Ezekiel Rock" by which it was known in the nineteenth century. In 1881, when the 144.25-acre tract that became Rock Cliff Farm was sold by J. M. Crenshaw to Joseph Newton Lowery the property was noted as "sometimes designated as the Ezekiel Rock tract," Wake Deeds, 90/21. Hereinafter Mr. Wells' term of identification, corrected to Zeagle's Rock, will be used. Mr. Troyer, his biographer, further elided the name of the outcropping, and its apparent reference to the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel, and described it as "Ziegle's Rock.")

With his profound appreciation for the old farm property that Mr. Wells christened Rock Cliff Farm in honor of its chief physical feature, he exercised a light hand on the landscape and grounds. His chief, surviving effort was the construction of a low stone wall along the east edge of the lawn surrounding the Ray-Wells House (#2) where the entrance lane is marked by stone piers rising above the low wall. This simple rustic feature is built of stones gathered on the property and held in place by deeply-recessed mortar. The wall became the background for border plantings of iris and other traditional perennials and wild flowers. He and Mrs. Wells added plantings of flowering specimen shrubs to the immediate grounds of their residence (#2), including Abelia and mock orange. The couple located a small pet cemetery at the woodland edge northwest of the studio (#6). The planting of blueberry bushes, *Vaccinium ashei*, in a linear clump near the meathouse (#3) was made about 1982 by Benson Kirkman (b. 1947), member and former president of the B. W. Wells Association, to honor Dr. Wells' early advocacy of blueberries as a cash crop in North Carolina.

Mr. Wells is said by his biographer to have "restored two old erosion-control terraces" on the farm but which of those that survive were the object of his attention is unclear. The spring house he built is lost; however, the pump house, a small recess in the ground covered by a small low frame lid with asphalt shingles is an incidental feature in the landscape. In 1961 Mr. Wells wrote of "clearing three miles of trails" at Rock Cliff Farm which were added to over time and might well have amounted to the "ten miles of nature trails and footpaths" attributed to Mr. Wells by his biographer in *Nature's Champion* (190). Five of these, the Zeagle Rock, Wild Flower, Spring, Terrace, and Moonshine trails are noted on the map of the property included in this

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nomination. Others, no doubt, were on the low ground which is now covered by Falls Lake. During the near quarter-century that Mr. Wells made his home at Rock Cliff Farm, he wrote often of the place and executed dozens of paintings of its landscapes and buildings, the rock cliff, and Zeagle's Rock. In both he recorded the natural and man-made character of Rock Cliff Farm that he and Mrs. Wells considered "a very, very desirable place to continue to live" (Troyer, 190).

2. Ray-Wells House  
ca. 1895; ca. 1954  
Contributing building

The Ray-Wells house is a two-part one-and-a-half-story frame dwelling that reflects two primary stages of construction and alteration by the two couples who occupied it. The east-facing single-pile, center-hall plan main block and its one-story-with-attic one-room detached kitchen, which is set perpendicular and parallel to the main block, are said to have been built by Charles J. Ray about 1895 and coincident with his marriage to Della Lowery. The house appears to have stood unchanged from ca. 1895 through the death of Mr. Ray in December 1941, the continued residence of his widow for a couple of years, and an interim ownership from 1944 to December 1950. Following their purchase of the property in 1950, Mr. and Mrs. Wells undertook three principal improvements to the house. They enclosed the center section of its front porch, that is the space between the paired windows on the three-bay façade, for use as a bathroom. Probably shortly thereafter the remaining south end of the porch and the adjoining uncovered south part of the façade were enclosed as a walk-in closet adjoining the couple's south first-story bedroom. On the west side of the house, the Wells also enclosed the covered porch and walk, linking the main block with the kitchen, with aluminum jalousie windows above a simple frame skirt. The third area in which they made changes to the late nineteenth-century house was on its north elevation where a nearly-full length porch was built or rebuilt on the north side of the kitchen and a separate one-story porch was built or rebuilt on the north gable end of the main block and connected with the remaining unenclosed portion of the house's original front porch. Mr. and Mrs. Wells made no changes to the interior of the house.

The house built by Charles J. Ray is similar in form, plan, fenestration, materials, and finish to other houses built on small rural landholdings in Wake County's New Light Township in the later-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The diminutive one-and-a-half-story house stands on a combination of dry-stack and mortared stone piers, is sheathed with plain weatherboards, and is covered with a triple-A roof of sheet metal. The symmetrical three-bay façade featured a center entrance flanked by conventional windows holding four-over-four sash in plain board surrounds, which were sheltered by a full-width hip roof porch supported by chamfered posts. On the upper story a like full-scale window is centered in the ornamental gable whose apex is

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decorated with scalloped edging on the weatherboards. The partial-height window openings to either side hold single four-pane sash fitted on a side-sliding interior track. These three openings have flat, two-part Greek Revival-style surrounds. The porch enclosures are sheathed with German siding and fitted with six-over-six sash and smaller windows (in the bathroom) whose positioning complements the original fenestration. At the north end of the enclosure one original chamfered post and a chamfered pilaster against the wall reflect the porch's earlier appearance. The eaves of the porch and the house have exposed rafters whose ends carry a face board.

The house's front porch was extended by Mr. Wells around its northeast corner and across the north gable end. The supports for this extension are paired, spaced two-by-fours. The stone shaft of the chimney, centered on the blind north gable end, is covered with cement stucco while the brickwork above the shoulders is exposed. The main block's south gable end has a single four-over-four sash window centered on each level and a small window in the enclosure illuminating the closet.

The main block's west elevation is symmetrical. The enclosed porch linking it with the kitchen is set in the center of the first story and flanked by four-over-four sash windows illuminating the single rooms on either side of the center hall. Above these conventional windows are short openings, like those on the façade, holding single four-pane sash.

The fabric and finish of the one-room, one-story-with-attic kitchen is essentially the same as that of the main block; however, the full-stone construction of its chimney, centered on the blind gable end, has raised the possibility that it might have originally been a one-room house that predates the construction of the main block. A simple frame shed-roof porch occupies most of the kitchen's north side except at the west end where a flue stack of concrete blocks stands against the kitchen wall. A Wells-era partially-glazed door is set in the near center of this side, which includes a four-over-four sash window, also sheltered by the porch. Single four-over-four sash windows are centered on each level of the kitchen's west gable end. Here a replacement one-over-one sash window is also centered in the west wall of the shed-roof pantry. On the south side of the kitchen, the shed roof covering the pantry on its west end continues as the roof of the enclosed porch. On the porch a board-and-rail door opens into the pantry while a door and four-over-four sash window are set in the kitchen's south elevation. At the east end of the enclosed porch a glazed-and-paneled door opens into the main block's center hall.

The interior of the Ray-Wells house survives virtually unaltered since its construction in the late-nineteenth century except for the painted walls of the second-story south bedroom which probably date to the Wells ownership. Otherwise, the wood floors and flush-sheathed pine walls and ceilings of the main block's halls and rooms have mellowed to a rich nutty-brown color. The finish throughout the main block is consistent. On the first story the door openings have seven-

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panel doors set in plain-board surrounds with molded back-bands while those on the second story are fitted with board-and-rail doors in plain-board surrounds. In the hall the stair rises along the south wall to the east. In a departure from traditional finish, it has a chamfered newel and thick handrail but no protective railing. On the second story the stair well is protected only by a continuation of the handrail. The closet under the stair is fitted with a board-and-rail door. Doors on the hall's long side walls open into the living room on the north and a bedroom on the south, while the house's original front door now opens into the bathroom enclosed on the front porch. Landscapes painted by Mr. Wells decorate the walls of the bathroom; a seascape is set above the bathtub on the east wall while a mountain landscape occupies the upper part of the bathroom's west wall. The original Italianate-style mantel in the living room has pilasters which rise from molded bases to a frieze board which arches over the firebox and has an echo in the curved front of the mantel shelf. This mantel decorates the only fireplace in the main block.

The interior of the kitchen is also unaltered except for its painted walls and ceiling. The large firebox with a soapstone hearth is centered in the room's east wall and fitted with a primitive version of the Italianate-style mantel in the living room. The stair to the attic is enclosed in the kitchen's southwest corner where a closet is set under the rise of the stair on the west wall. A two-part cupboard is built into the vee of the enclosure and fitted with board-and-rail doors. A board-and-rail door also opens onto the stair which rises to a floored but unfinished attic.

3. Meathouse  
ca. 1885-1890  
Contributing building

Built of carefully hewn logs and log planks that are fitted with half-dovetail joints, the meathouse is the oldest surviving building at Rock Cliff Farm and is believed to date to the ownership of Joseph Newton Lowery. The rectangular, gable-front one-story building rests on heavy log sills that, in turn, lay on shallow stone piers. The building has round pole rafters and 5-V sheet metal roofing. The east, west, and south elevations of the building are blind: all sides are fitted with wide vertical cornerboards which protect the corner joints. The plates project in a shallow fashion on the rear and for some thirty inches on the north front where a projecting extension of the roof protects the heavy board-and-rail door. The upper gable ends of the meathouse are sheathed with plain weatherboards. The interior has a thick pine floor and a partial partition wall set on a north/south axis. During the Wellses's ownership the building was used for domestic storage.

4. Lowery-Ray Cemetery  
1901  
Contributing site

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The Lowery-Ray Cemetery contains the marked graves of two owners of the property that became the Wellses's Rock Cliff Farm and four of their kinsmen. It occupies a rectangular plot on the grass-covered lawn of the Ray-Wells house that is defined by a wood board fence measuring about thirty feet on its east and west sides and thirty-five feet on its north and south sides. The grounds of the cemetery are partially shaded and ornamented with two evergreens that probably date to the early twentieth century. The graves are arranged in three rows on a north/south axis. The grave of Joseph Newton Lowery (182\_-1901) has pride of place in the center row and it is flanked on the north by the grave of his eldest daughter Roxana Lowery Keith (1852-1902) and on the south by the graves of Charles J. Ray (1876-1941) and his wife Della Lowery Ray (1873-1934), Mr. Lowery's youngest known daughter.

A single grave, that of C. A. Ray (1905-1906), lies in the east row, while another single interment, that of Cleo Patery (a possible elision of Cleopatra) S. L. Glenn (1865-1919), occupies the center of the west row. The gravestones are conventional in appearance and their inscriptions. The Lowery and C. A. Ray stones are locally made and probably of native stone. The graves of Mrs. Keith and Mrs. Glenn are marked by unsigned white marble tablets and foot stones. The Keith marker features a carved lily in a roundel and the Glenn marker has carved ivy leaves. The single granite stone marking the graves of Mr. and Mrs. Ray has carved Moderne-style decoration. It was erected in the summer of 1944 at a cost of \$185 by M. Arnaiz.

5. Privy  
ca. 1950-1954; rebuilt 2006  
Noncontributing building

The privy is a small rectangular frame building sheathed with painted flush horizontal boards and covered with an asphalt shingle shed roof. The corners of the building are finished with vertical boards and a board-and-rail door is set in the east side. During the late twentieth century the privy built by Mr. Wells deteriorated into near ruin and its roof partially collapsed. In summer 2006 the privy was rebuilt, replicating the form and materials utilized by Mr. Wells. Portions of the original siding on the east front and the door were salvaged and reused in the rebuilding.

6. Studio  
1954; ca. 1955-1960  
Contributing building

The studio is a substantial one-story rectangular two-room frame building erected by Mr. Wells to provide a studio and office in which to paint and write and a smaller workshop for household and farm projects. Soon after its completion he added a shallow shed-roof closet across its northeast gable end. The original two-room building stands on mortared stone piers and is

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covered by a side-gable roof of 5-V sheet metal. On its symmetrical four-bay south front elevation doors in the two center bays open respectively into the workshop and the studio in the unequal-sized west and east rooms. These doorways are fitted with nine-pane above two-panel doors. The workshop has a screened door. The flanking window openings hold six-over-six sash and are fitted with vertical board blinds. A window in the center of the south gable end has the same fittings. On the rear elevation a horizontal window of paired six-pane sash is positioned high on the wall and illuminates a workbench under it in the workshop. Paired window openings holding six-over-six sash and fitted with blinds illuminate the studio. The closet addition has blind elevations sheathed with German siding. It, too, stands on mortared stone piers and has a sheet-metal roof. The workshop has pine flooring and wallboard on its walls and ceiling. A door connects with the larger studio space which also has pine floors and painted wallboard walls and ceiling. The ceiling in the studio follows the pitch of the roof and is fitted with a multi-pane skylight. The present skylight, generally replicating the one installed by Dr. Wells which had deteriorated, was put in place in spring 2004. The dominant feature in the studio is a bold stone chimney, built by Mr. Wells of stone gathered on the property, that stands against the west wall of the studio and in the approximate center of the building. It is fitted with a red oak log shelf above the fireplace. Furniture and fittings, including a desk and an easel used by Mr. Wells, remain here. A seven-panel door in the center of the studio's east wall opens into the closet that has pine floors and exposed studs on its three outer walls on which shelves are mounted for storage.

7. Lumber Rack  
ca. 1954-55  
Contributing structure

This simple rectangular frame storage rack was built to provide covered storage for lumber (and possibly cut wood for the studio fireplace). Its structural uprights are cut cedar saplings. The small two-level rack is covered with a gable roof of asphalt sheeting.

8. Ray House  
ca. 1900-1920  
Contributing building

The history of this rectangular, one-and-a-half-story, center-hall plan, single-pile frame house is unconfirmed. It stands about 950 feet east of the Ray-Wells House and on the immediate south edge of the farm road connecting the Ray-Wells House with Bent Road. Local tradition suggests its use as a tenant house; however, the small size of the Ray farm and its arable acreage somewhat discourage that possibility. While its exterior appearance is similar to that of the main block of the Ray-Wells house, and it boasts a stone chimney with a brick stack that contains but

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one fireplace, as does the Ray-Wells house, the interior finish is more rudimentary and lacks the simple refinements seen in the farm seat. Perhaps the house was built as a residence for a laborer on the Ray farm, or it might also have been built for a less affluent member of the extended, intermarried Lowery and Ray families and later became a laborer's dwelling. During Mr. Wells's ownership and until 2005 the house was occupied by David Ray, a possible kinsman of Charles J. Ray, who assisted Mr. Wells with work on the farm.

The Ray house stands on stacked stone piers and is covered with a side-gable roof of 5-V sheet metal. As at the Ray-Wells house, the shallow eaves on the gable ends are sheathed while those along the front and rear elevations have exposed rafter ends fitted with a face board. The symmetrical three-bay north front elevation features a center entrance flanked by window openings holding four-over-four sash in plain board surrounds. This fenestration pattern recurs throughout the house. The front door and the windows are sheltered by a one-story, probably replacement, shed-roof porch with a wood floor, composite two-by-four supports, and vertically sheathed shed ends. A mortared chimney with brick stack stands in the center of the house's east gable end where a four-pane window is located on the south side of the brick stack. Side-hinged, it provides the only natural light and ventilation for the second-story east bedroom. On the west gable end a board-and-rail door, centered in the first-story elevation, opens into the kitchen. A conventional window centered above the door provides light and air to the west second-story bedroom. The house's symmetrical south rear elevation effectively mirrors the façade.

The interior of the Ray house follows a center-hall plan. The stair rises along the west wall in the hall to the south and the second story. Instead of a newel it is fitted with a two-by-four rising from the second step to the ceiling to which a two-by-four handrail is attached. The hall has a pine board floor and flush-sheathed walls and ceiling while the adjoining living room and kitchen have wallboard (which is probably applied over sheathing). This pattern is repeated on the second story. The front and back doors are replacements; however, the doors into the first-floor rooms and the bedroom above the living room are of board-and-rail construction with chamfered rails. They are simply framed with plain boards. The living room fireplace is fitted with a primitive Italianate-style mantel with pilasters rising to a frieze board which arches over the firebox and has a braced shelf.

9.      Ray House Outbuilding  
         ca. 1900-1920  
         Contributing building

The original use and early history of this substantial rectangular frame outbuilding remains to be confirmed; however, for the last half-century or so it has served as a workshop and storage building. The existence of a ceiling-mounted flue in the northwest corner of the single-space

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interior indicates the one-time presence of a stove and possible use as a rudimentary residence for a laborer. The outbuilding stands on simple, low stone stacks and is covered with a front-gable roof of corrugated sheet metal. Its elevations are sheathed with unpainted weatherboards, and their joints at the four corners of the building are covered with vertical cornerboards in a manner like those on the meathouse (#3). The apexes of the front and rear gables are unsheathed, allowing ventilation of the loft. A board-and-rail door is centered on the south elevation, facing the house, and a board-and-rail blind covers an off-center opening on the rear elevation. The interior has a wide board floor and ceiling and exposed stud walls. A small opening inside the door, in the southeast corner, provides access to the loft; however, no ladder or stair is present.

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8. NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCESummary Statement

Rock Cliff Farm, the retirement residence of Dr. Bertram Whittier Wells (1884-1978), holds statewide significance in the areas of conservation, science, and literature and satisfies National Register Criterion B for its association with a man who wrote a seminal book on the natural history of North Carolina, while serving as head of the department of botany and plant pathology at North Carolina State College. *The Natural Gardens of North Carolina* was published in 1932 and reprinted in 1967, 1971, 1979, and 2002. The 144.20-acre farm, named by Dr. Wells for the towering rock cliffs rising above the waters of the Neuse River, was a small, near-subsistence farm occupied by members of the extended Lowery-Ray family from the 1880s until the death of Charles J. Ray in 1941. Dr. Wells had been drawn to the farm during the Ray ownership because of the exceptional botanical and geological character of the property embraced in a bend of the Neuse River. When it became available in December 1950 he bought it immediately. In 1954, when he retired from the faculty of North Carolina State College, having served as head of the botany department from 1919 to 1949 and a professor for another five years, he gave up his long-time (and now lost) Cameron Park residence in Raleigh and relocated here. Dr. Wells and his wife occupied the Ray house and other buildings erected during the Lowery-Ray ownership and made them their home, exercising a light, respectful hand on the buildings and land alike. The period of significance begins in 1950 with his acquisition of the property, continues through his relocation here in 1954 and the reprinting of *The Natural Gardens of North Carolina* in 1967 and 1971, and ends with Mr. Wells' death in 1978. Rock Cliff Farm satisfies National Register Criteria Consideration G for its association with the life of the man whose classic book remains "the most readable and informative account of the North Carolina landscape that has ever been written" (NGNC, 2002, xi).

When Dr. Wells came to North Carolina in 1919 he joined a small group of botanists and others in the natural sciences who were leaders in an unprecedented flowering of interest in the natural history of North Carolina. This group, which included William Chambers Coker at the University of North Carolina, Herbert Hutchinson Brimley, curator of the North Carolina State Museum, Charlotte Hilton Green, and Hugo Leander Blomquist of Duke University, lectured and published widely in the first half of the twentieth century. Their efforts, and particularly those of Dr. Wells as a pioneering ecologist in North Carolina, were the first in a series of important influences that gave rise to broadly-based conservation initiatives in the second half of the twentieth century. In his introduction to the 2002 reprint the North Carolina naturalist and historian Lawrence S. Earley wrote that "when it comes to understanding North Carolina's landscape, there is still only one book to read and learn from. It is *The Natural Gardens*." Mr. Earley placed *The Natural Gardens* "on a small shelf of classic texts on the natural history of

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North Carolina” where it keeps company with John Lawson’s *A New Voyage to Carolina*, Mark Catesby’s *Natural History of Florida, Carolina and Bahama Islands*, and William Bartram’s *Travels*. Of the places where B. W. Wells lived and worked Rock Cliff Farm, which comprises the residual 83.442 acres after the impoundment of the Neuse River to create Falls Lake, holds the strongest and best associations with the man who wrote the primer for all who would appreciate the natural landscape of North Carolina.

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## Rock Cliff Farm

Historical Background

In December 1950, when Bertram Whittier Wells and his (second) wife Maude Rhodes Barnes Wells purchased the acreage of Rock Cliff Farm, he was semi-retired and living with Mrs. Wells at 1605 Park Drive in Raleigh's Cameron Park subdivision. The house had been his home since about 1919. Having come to Raleigh in 1919 as head of the Department of Botany and Plant Pathology at North Carolina State College of Agriculture and Engineering, Dr. Wells served as chairman of the department until 1949 when he reached the age of sixty-five. Following his retirement as administrator he continued on the faculty of the college for another five years, until his full retirement as a college educator in 1954. His acquisition of Rock Cliff Farm cemented an association with a place of strong ecological interest that dated at least to the early 1940s, when he and Mrs. Wells first visited the property, and they returned thereafter for picnics and field study. For the next three and one-half years, until spring 1954 Dr. and Mrs. Wells came to Rock Cliff Farm on weekends and during the summers. In 1954 they made the permanent move to the farm from their Cameron Park house. Their relocation to Rock Cliff Farm appears to have been completed in 1955; however, it was not until 1956 that the couple sold 1605 Park Drive to Willis R. and Ethel Mae Casey (Wake County Deeds, 1253/527).

The 144.20-acre tract that became the Wells's Rock Cliff Farm had been a farm holding and residence of the Lowery-Ray family since about 1881 when Joseph Newton Lowery acquired it from John M. and Louisa Crenshaw (Wake Deeds, 90/20-22). Mr. Lowery (182?-1901) was a son of Green Lowery (1788-1872) and, probably, Chloe Joiner who he married in 1812. Joseph Newton Lowery is believed to have lived in this part of Wake County, on lands watered by the Neuse River, west of Wake Forest, and north of Raleigh, since birth. On 5 February 1872 Green Lowery and his (second?) wife Elizabeth (Allen) Lowery conveyed a tract of 100 acres on Horse Creek to Joseph Newton Lowery (Wake Deeds, 33/726-27) and two other parcels totaling 100 acres to another son H. A. Lowery (Wake Deeds, 33/724-25). Whether Joseph Newton Lowery lived on this family land is unconfirmed; however, in 1877 he purchased a tract of 266 acres from the estate of Michael Thompson (Wake Deeds, 67/54-55), Mr. Lowery next purchased this tract of 144.25 acres and a smaller tract of sixty-nine acres comprising lots three and seven of the Thomas Ray estate division from John M. Crenshaw (Wake Deeds, 90/20-22). An examination of the Wake County census records indicates Mr. Lowery was married twice, first to a wife named Elizabeth by whom he had two children, Roxana and Alfred, and next to Emiline Bailey (1835-191?) with whom he had at least five other children including a daughter Della (1873-1933).

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According to local tradition Mr. Lowery occupied this property, identified in the 1881 deed as "the Buck Mangum place or land and sometimes designated as the Ezekiel Rock tract" from his purchase of it until his death in June 1901. His long-lost house is said to have stood west/southwest of the Ray-Wells house (#2). On 18 February 1890 Mr. Lowery mortgaged this property and his sixty-nine-acre tract of the Thomas Ray division to L. Woodlief (Wake Deeds, 110/762). On 23 February 1898 these Lowery lands and others on which L. Woodlief held a mortgage were sold at the Wake County Courthouse and bid in at \$120 by John W. Woodlief of Franklin County, North Carolina (Wake Deeds, 147/310-12). On 18 March 1898 Mr. Woodlief sold this 144.25-acre tract to Joseph Newton Lowery, Sr., for \$245 (Wake Deeds, 163/100). Fifteen months later Mr. Lowery died and was buried in the Lowery-Ray Cemetery (#4) on his farm.

Alfred G. Lowery was the executor of his father's estate, and the twentieth-century history of the property begins with its sale in spring 1903 at public auction. This property was bid in at \$340 by Charles J. Ray, who had married Della Lowery and was living with her, probably on the property and in the Ray-Wells house (#2) which they would occupy until their deaths. On 9 May 1903 Alfred G. Lowery, Commissioner, conveyed the farm, now described as 144.20 acres, to Mr. Ray (Wake Deeds, 177/139-40). The conveyance was subject to the dower interest in forty acres of the farm assigned to Mr. Lowery's widow, Emiline F. (Bailey) Lowery.

At this distance, and given the paucity of surviving Lowery-Ray family records, the history of the four surviving buildings that stand on the property acquired by Mr. Wells in 1950 is uncertain. But surely the oldest of the quartet is the dovetail-plank log meathouse (#3), which is likely nineteenth century in date and probably an outbuilding of the long-lost Joseph Newton Lowery residence. It is described as having stood west/southwest of the Ray-Wells house (#2) and in the area where today the open grass-covered meadow merges with the native woodland. According to tradition the Ray-Wells house (#2) was built by Charles J. Ray, probably coincident with his marriage to Della Lowery (in the 1890s?). Charles J. Ray (1876-1941) was a native of Wake County and the son of A. C. and Sallie (Ball) Ray.

Twentieth-century census records support this tradition. In the 1900 Wake County Census for New Light Township household #33 comprised Joseph Newton Lowery, his wife Emiline, and two grandchildren bearing the Ray surname. Charles J. Ray and his wife Della resided alone in the adjoining household (#34). Members of both the Ray and Lowery families headed other households in the immediate neighborhood. In the 1910 Census Charles J. Ray is listed as head of household #38 in New Light Township that included his wife, her mother, a cousin, Julia A. Ray, who was sixty-two and a widow, and Herbert Harrison, a seventeen-year-old black farmhand. The matter of who occupied the Lowery house is unclear, as is the question of

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whether the second, slightly later farm residence (#8), now standing to the east with an outbuilding (#9), had been built.

Little is known of the Ray family's occupation of these buildings and their operation of the farm; however, public records and interments in the family cemetery confirm certain facts. Charles J. and Della Ray lived here on the farm in the Ray-Wells house (#2) until their deaths. In 1902 Roxana (Lowery) Keith (1852-1902), Mrs. Ray's eldest sister and the wife of Calvin Keith, died and was buried in the family cemetery (#4). Four years later G. A. Ray (1905-1906) died and was buried in the cemetery. Whether he was the son of Charles and Della Ray is not confirmed. Whether Emiline (Bailey) Lowery, who died between 1910 and 1920, is buried here in an unmarked grave is also unknown. The next marked interment in the cemetery, that of one Cleo S. L. Glenn (1865-1919), also remains to be confirmed within the extended, intermarried Lowery-Ray family. The penultimate burial in the family cemetery was that of Della (Lowery) Ray who died on 23 October 1934 and was buried here the following day. Sometime prior to summer 1937 Charles J. Ray married Pearl Arnett (1891-1959).

The extent of farming operations here during Mr. Ray's ownership has not been confirmed; however, the existence of agricultural outbuildings is based on local tradition and traces of terracing survive in the woodland floor north of the Ray family house (#8) and to the west of the main farm complex. Mr. Ray's barn stood to the southwest of his house and was lost, apparently, during the Wells ownership. A smaller agricultural outbuilding stood near the remains of a pig lot west/southwest of the Ray-Wells house and in the area of the Lowery house. The extent to which the outbuilding (#9) at the Ray family house was used for agricultural purposes is unclear.

Mr. Ray's farming operations in the closing years of his life appear to have been largely confined to cotton as a cash crop with other crops raised in smaller quantities to feed his livestock. The inventory of his estate taken after his death at the age of sixty-five in 1941 indicates the limited scale of agriculture on his property. He owned "2 old mules" valued at \$25, farming implements valued at \$25, poultry and livestock with a value of \$15, "Cotton seed, Shucks and Feed" valued at \$55, and other crops valued at \$75. His listed agricultural assets totaled \$195. Together with a check on hand in the amount of \$100.32 for one bale of cotton, farming-related property of \$295.32, represented over one-half of his total personal property valued at \$558.32 (Charles J. Ray Estate Records, Wake County Clerk of Court).

The straitened circumstances of farm life were alleviated somewhat by the periodic sale of timber. On 8 January 1920 Mr. Ray and his wife executed a timber deed to O. A. Norwood for "all merchantable timber that will measure 8 inches in diameter 12 inches above the ground" on a specified seventy-five-acre portion of his farm (Wake Deeds, 351/452-53). Seventeen years later, on 9 July 1937 Charles J. and Pearl Ray executed a timber deed to the Burgess Lumber

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Company for "all the timber" on a specified tract of the farm whose acreage was not given (Wake Deeds, 754/239-41). While only small trees were left standing under the provision of the 1920 deed, the 1937 conveyance appears to have allowed the effective clear-cutting of a substantial part of the Ray farm. Following the death of his father in about 1931, Mr. Ray received lot #6 of the A. C. Ray division comprising 18.20 acres. On 21 March 1940 Charles and Pearl Ray executed a timber deed on that property to the Whitley and Barrow Lumber Company for "all of the Pine and Poplar timber that will measure eight inches and wider across the stump twelve inches above the ground when cut" (Wake Deeds, 838/85-87). On all three deeds Mr. Ray, unable to write his name, made "his mark."

Charles J. Ray died intestate on 11 December 1941, and his body was buried beside that of his wife Della. Thomas H. Ray of Durham, his brother, qualified as administrator of his estate. In the preliminary inventory of his estate, Mr. Ray's real property was valued at \$1,000 and his personal property, including a passenger car worth \$200, was valued at \$558.32. An auction of personal property was held on 2 February 1942. Mr. Ray's real estate, including the home farm that would become Rock Cliff Farm and the 18.20-acre tract he inherited from his father, was sold at public auction on 27 May 1944. The two tracts were bid in for \$2,677.50 by W. T. Pollard of Durham County and conveyed to him by deed on 27 June 1944 (Wake Deeds, 908/356-57). The Lowery-Ray cemetery (#4) was excepted from the conveyance. In the summer of 1944 Mr. M. Arnaiz erected a gravestone for Charles and Della Ray at a cost of \$185. With the sale of the real estate the total receipts of the estate were \$2,715.39. After the indebtedness totaling \$941.96 was paid and Thomas Ray was paid his administrator's commissions of \$88.51, \$1,684.92, was distributed to Mr. Ray's widow, his four surviving siblings, and twenty-two nieces and nephews (Charles J. Ray Estate Records, Wake County Clerk of Court). Mr. Ray's estate was closed on 28 July 1944. Six years later, on 22 August 1950, Harvey S. and Ruth (Elliott) Pollard conveyed the 144.20-acre Ray farm to Ewell C. and Rena (Elliott) Parrish (Wake Deeds, 1053/193-94, who, in turn, would sell the farm to Mr. and Mrs. Wells on 4 December 1950 (Wake Deeds, 1062/414-16).

In his biography of B. W. Wells, *Nature's Champion*, James T. Troyer recounted the circumstances of Wells's acquisition of the property that became his Rock Cliff Farm. His account of events was based on communications with Mrs. Wells.

Wells and his wife, Maude, had made a habit in the 1940s of taking Sunday excursions through the countryside around Raleigh, looking for possible remnants of the original natural vegetation of the area. On one such occasion they investigated a site which Wells had chosen from a map as a likely spot. About twenty miles from Raleigh and near the town of Wake Forest, the 144-acre tract was a run-down old farm; it included considerable woodland and an extremely

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scenic section known as Turkey Neck, where the Neuse River reversed itself twice in a double bend. Here the stream flowed past granitic outcrops and bluffs, topped at the end of Bent Road by the fifty-foot-tall overhanging feature called Ziegle's Rock. Wells and Maude fell in love with this place, returning to it many times, often with picnic lunches, down to the rocks, those beautiful rocks. They eventually met the elderly owner and toured the property, which included a primitive old house and dilapidated farm buildings. They had been thinking of getting a little weekend place, and Wells often spoke of asking the owner of the farm to sell him an acre or two. But he never did (Troyer, 188).

It was entirely by chance that Mr. and Mrs. Wells learned that the farm was for sale in December 1950. They were on a shopping trip to Durham, to buy a washing machine, when they stopped first for lunch, bought a Durham newspaper, and saw an advertisement for the property. The money they were carrying for the washing machine was applied that day as a deposit on the farm. "It was," Maude said later, "the most wonderful thing that ever happened to us" (Troyer, 189).

Mr. Troyer continued with a paragraph describing the process by which B. W. Wells made the old Ray farm his own--a place he would soon come to call Rock Cliff Farm.

He essentially took on a new career, a private one fully supported by Maude, in which through years of hard work he made that old farm match the natural beauty of its site and fit his retirement life perfectly. He repaired and remodeled the house, installed a pump and water line, constructed a spring house and pump house, restored two old erosion-control terraces, cleared land for scenic views, inventoried plant species, and laid out ten miles of nature trails and footpaths. And every day he did the chores inherent in an isolated existence. He built from scratch a building to serve him as a combination office, workshop, and art studio, complete with skylight. He found on the land a tremendous pile of rocks of various sizes and used these to construct two features of which he was ever proud. In his studio he fashioned a large stone fireplace and chimney, using a six-foot half of a tree trunk as a mantel. And outside he built a long, low stone wall to set off a row of cultivated wildflowers. In the end, his efforts made the old farm a place of honest rustic beauty. It became, in his words, "a very, very desirable place to continue to live." (Troyer, 189-90)

In his renovation of the weatherboarded frame Ray farmhouse and its kitchen dependency (#2) Mr. Wells left a light handprint on the simply-finished dwelling. His improvements were few but critical. He supplemented or replaced the existing electrical service to the house. The open porch

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linking the single-pile, center-hall four-room house and one-room-with-attic kitchen was simply enclosed with boards and glazing. Heating continued to be provided by wood stoves, and later by oil circulators. Water lines were run to the kitchen and to the bathroom which Mr. Wells added to the house by enclosing the center section of the house's original east-facing front porch. He also enclosed the south end of the porch as a walk-in closet and passage that opened off the south, first-story room that became the Wells's bedroom. The room on the north side of the hall became the couple's living room.

Over time Mr. Wells added two buildings (#5-6) and a wood rack (#7) to the former Ray homeplace. Given the total lack of toilet facilities, Mr. Wells may well have built the shed-roof privy (#5) soon after acquiring the property, for use prior to his permanent removal to the farm. The two-room studio (#6), a rectangular frame building sheathed with German siding, included a workshop on its west end and a spacious studio illuminated by both conventional windows and a skylight. A shed-roof closet was soon added off the studio and across the full east end of the building. The nearby wood rack probably dates to the same period.

His improvements to the grounds of Rock Cliff Farm were likewise minimal and complementary to its simple character. The low stone retaining wall, which physically sets the grounds of the house apart from the larger meadow flanking the approach road, was the principal enhancement and served as a backdrop for a flower border. He also added fruit trees to the grounds that already featured flowering shrubs probably planted by the Rays. Mr. Wells appears to have made no improvements to the second house (#8) on the grounds and its outbuilding (#9) which continued to serve as a residence for a member of the Ray family who took on the unofficial role of farm assistant/caretaker.

As Mr. Troyer writes, "The farm became, in effect, a privately owned nature preserve. Wells and his wife enjoyed sharing it with others, and many people visited them there, friends and strangers, individuals and groups" (Troyer, 192). In April 1961 Mr. Wells published an appreciation of the property in the *North Carolina Wild Flower Preservation Society Newsletter* under the title, "The flora of one-hundred and fifty acres." In May 1963 he and Mrs. Wells hosted a meeting of the society at Rock Cliff Farm (Troyer, 71). Through the 1960s and 1970s B. W. Wells continued to study, to write, and to champion his botanical, horticultural, and ecological interests. Painting also took up long hours of time, and he produced hundreds of paintings in the studio, many of which were given to admiring friends and colleagues. Among the most important is the series of views he made of the buildings and landscape features of Rock Cliff Farm, including Zeagle's Rock. A partial inventory made by Wells in 1973 includes 342 works (Troyer, 191). In March 1974 an exhibition of his paintings was mounted at North Carolina State University (Troyer, 195).

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What might have remained an idyllic retirement here at Rock Cliff Farm was clouded to some degree when Congress enacted the Flood Control Act of 1965 which authorized the construction of a dam on the Neuse River and the creation of Falls Lake. The project was designed to provide flood control, water supply, regional recreational opportunities, and fish and wildlife benefits. Planning for the project advanced through the 1960s and implementation came in the 1970s and early 1980s. In 1983 the dam inundated the low-lying bottomlands of Rock Cliff Farm along the former edge of the Neuse River and altered the dramatic character of Zeagle's Rock.

The Falls Lake project also came to have an impact on Mr. Wells' financial security in his retirement years. Investors and others who foresaw the potential for great profits through the acquisition of thousands of acres by the United States government, bought up land in the project area which they would later sell to the government. On 21 April 1969 Mr. and Mrs. Wells sold Rock Cliff Farm to a group of eight men, mostly Raleigh attorneys, for \$75,000 (Wake County Deeds, 1876/259-60). The sale was accompanied by a lease whereby the new owners of Rock Cliff Farm agreed to rent the property to B. W. and Mrs. Wells in exchange for their maintenance of the existing buildings, on which they were to keep insurance and pay the annual Wake County taxes "so long as B. W. Wells lives on said property" (Wake County Deeds, 2602/536-38). The lease, dated 12 May 1969, was held for nearly nine years, until 29 March 1978, when it was recorded.

Bertram Whittier Wells died on 29 December 1978. His body was cremated. Twelve days later, on 10 January 1979 the owners of Rock Cliff Farm executed a deed conveying the property to the United States of America for \$233,000 (Wake Deeds, 2698/380-83). Maude Barnes Wells was her husband's sole heir, and she received assets of just over \$30,000 and the royalty rights to *The Natural Gardens of North Carolina* (B. W. Wells Estate Records, Wake County Clerk of Court). Mrs. Wells remained at Rock Cliff Farm until 1981 when she relocated to an apartment at 2510 Greenway Avenue in Raleigh's Country Club Homes complex where she lived until her health failed in about 1999. After an extended stay in a rehabilitation center in Raleigh she was relocated to the Rex Nursing Care Center of Apex where she died on 20 June 2001. In 1968 Mr. Wells had expressed the wish that his ashes be scattered at Zeagle's Rock (Troyer, 193). That was not to be. After his death, and perhaps coincident with her leavetaking of Rock Cliff Farm, Maude Wells interred his ashes and those of his first wife in her father's family plot in Oakwood Cemetery and marked their separate interments with ground level markers. Her ashes were also buried here in a pendant position to those of Edna Metz Wells. By the time of her death Maude Barnes Wells had given away virtually all of her jewelry, silver, china, furniture, paintings, and other personal property. Her residual estate of \$211,064.92 was distributed among favorite organizations, institutions, friends, and relatives. The North Carolina Wild Flower Preservation Society received \$15,000, the SPCA of Wake County received \$24,769.48, the D. H. Hill Library at North Carolina State University received \$28,897.72, and the B. W. Wells

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Association, established to perpetuate the interest of Mr. Wells and to preserve Rock Cliff Farm, was the beneficiary of \$32,897.72 (Maude Rhodes Barnes Wells Estate Records, Wake County Clerk of Court).

Following the completion of the Falls Dam in 1981, the waters of the Neuse River filled the vast reservoir to the designated level, 251.5 feet above the mean sea level, in December 1983. In the years between Mr. Wells' death and the inundation of about 60 acres of Rock Cliff Farm, friends and colleagues lobbied for the preservation of Rock Cliff Farm, its buildings, and the landscape that was his final field of study. Members of the North Carolina Wild Flower Preservation Society and the Raleigh-Wake County Audubon Society were leaders in this effort and became prominent figures in the organization of the B. W. Wells Association in 1982. After the lake reached its intended level the Army Corps of Engineers turned over management of the parklands around Falls Lake to the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation. Since 1982 the B. W. Wells Association has cooperated with state park officials and staff in the preservation and educational activities at the B. W. Wells Interpretive Center which utilizes the buildings and grounds at the heart of Rock Cliff Farm.

Conservation, Science, and Literature Significance

The statewide significance of Rock Cliff Farm in the areas of conservation and science is associated with the life and career of Bertram Whittier Wells (1884-1978), a pioneering botanist and ecologist in North Carolina, and the author of *The Natural Gardens of North Carolina*, who made his home here from 1954 until his death. Although the residual acreage of Rock Cliff Farm is only about one-half of the 144 acres he purchased in 1950, being the higher ground that lay above his bottomlands on the Neuse River that were inundated by Falls Lake in 1983, this property remains the single place in North Carolina which retains the strongest associations with Dr. Wells and his long distinguished career in the state.

Mr. Wells came to North Carolina in 1919 as head of the botany department at North Carolina State College of Agriculture and Engineering. In November 1919 he purchased the property at 1605 Park Drive, in Raleigh's Cameron Park residential subdivision, and made his home there with both his first wife Edna Metz Wells (18\_\_-1938) and his second wife Maude Rhodes Barnes Wells (1906-2001) until 1954 when he came here. In 1956 he and Mrs. Wells sold 1605 Park Drive to Willis Casey, also a faculty member of North Carolina State University. That house was greatly damaged in a fire on 22 November 1995 that claimed the life of Mrs. Casey, and the ruins were subsequently pulled down. Bertram Whittier Wells also owned two properties in coastal North Carolina that were largely summer cottages and stations for his summer field studies. He acquired a cottage at Carolina Beach after the death of Edna Wells in 1938 and held it into the 1940s when he and Maude Wells purchased the historic Stuart House at Southport that

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was destroyed by a hurricane in 1954 (Troyer, 188). The Carolina Beach cottage is believed to be lost. Thus three of the four places he occupied during his long career in his adopted state are gone.

During his tenure at today's North Carolina State University, the botany department occupied quarters in three successive buildings. In 1919 when he came to the college the botany department was housed in Patterson Hall where it remained until 1940 (Troyer, 120-21). In that year the department was relocated to Winston Hall, an older, ca. 1910 classroom building, where offices of the department remained until 1952-53. Both buildings have been renovated through time for other administrative, office, and classroom use. Gardner Hall, completed in 1952, was designed specifically for the university's biological sciences departments. The offices and related functions of the botany department were moved into Gardner Hall in late 1952 and early 1953. Mr. Wells had an office in Gardner Hall, which remains the home of the botany department, for about a year and a half. That small office has long been occupied by James Richard Troyer (b. 1929) who wrote Mr. Wells's biography, *Nature's Champion*, published in 1993. Thus, Rock Cliff Farm, a place he first visited in the 1940s, acquired in 1950, made his home in 1954, and occupied for the final twenty-four years of his life is the single place in North Carolina that is best associated with his role as the author of a long-acknowledged classic work on the North Carolina landscape and his contributions to the study of botany, ecology, and the plant communities of North Carolina.

Bertram Whittier Wells was born in Troy, Ohio, on 5 March 1884. He was the youngest of five children born to the Reverend Edward T. Wells, a Methodist minister, and his wife Lucia Morehouse Wells. He grew up in a series of small towns in Ohio where his father was posted to churches. In the later 1890s the family was living in Dayton, Ohio, where Mr. Wells attended Steele High School. It was there, while a freshman in his first botany class, that he determined to make the study of plants his profession (Troyer, 162-63). After graduating from Steele High School, he entered Ohio State University and received an A. B. degree in 1911. It was while a student in Columbus, Ohio, that he developed the patterns of field study, research, and writing that he would exercise through his professional career and long into retirement.

Between 1911 and 1915 Mr. Wells served on the faculty of three colleges. The first of two one-year teaching positions was spent at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, where he was an instructor in biology. The next year, 1912-1913, found him in Storrs, Connecticut, where he held a temporary post as head of the botany department at Connecticut Agricultural College. In 1913, in Manhattan, Kansas, he began the first of two years as assistant professor of botany at Kansas State Agricultural College, now Kansas State University (Troyer, 167-68). Not unexpectedly, his experience as an educator prompted him to return to school as a student in 1915 at Ohio State University, where he completed a master's thesis on the galls of the hackberry tree and received

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an M. A. degree in 1916. He moved on to the University of Chicago that year and continued his research on insect galls under Dr. Henry Chandler Cowles (1869-1939), who was then serving as associate professor of botany and professor of plant ecology. Dr. Cowles's "particular fields of research . . . in physiographic and comparative ecology, ecological relations of dune vegetation, (and) trees as indicators of past topographic conditions . . ." (NCAB, XXXIX, 279) both influenced and paralleled Dr. Wells's work. He received his doctoral degree in 1917 and in August of that year he married Edna Metz, who he had met while teaching at Kansas State Agricultural College.

Dr. Wells's first post, after receiving his doctorate, was one that he long considered a misstep. He accepted a position as professor of biology at Grubbs Vocational College in Arlington, Texas, but found that the school, in its first year of operation, had both impossibly inadequate facilities and students who could not rise to the standard he expected. He immediately sought another position and in the summer of 1918 he and Mrs. Wells moved to Fayetteville, Arkansas, where he was both professor of botany and head of the department at the University of Arkansas (Troyer, 168-69). The situation in Arkansas, while an improvement over that in Texas, was still less than satisfactory, and he was again seeking a new position, a search that brought him to Raleigh and the North Carolina State College of Agriculture and Engineering.

Following a pattern that may well have repeated the circumstances that had taken him to both Texas and Arkansas, Dr. Wells was interviewed for the North Carolina State College position in Fayetteville by Charles B. Williams, Dean of the School of Agriculture. His former colleagues at Kansas State Agricultural College had strongly endorsed him, and Dr. Wells accepted the offer to come to Raleigh as head of the department of botany and plant pathology, apparently without having visited the North Carolina capital. He would be one of three professors in his new department. While the physical conditions at the Raleigh college have been described as inadequate "during Wells's entire term as head" of the botany department (Troyer, 121), Dr. Wells found North Carolina, its landscape, and its wealth of plant material to his liking. It would be his home for the next fifty-nine years.

From his arrival in North Carolina in 1919 into the early 1970s, a period of just over a half-century, Bertram Whittier Wells was an ardent champion of botany, ecological studies, and conservation in North Carolina. His life and particularly his career in North Carolina are well treated in *Nature's Champion: B. W. Wells, Tar Heel Ecologist*, a biography written by James Richard Troyer and published by the University of North Carolina Press in 1993, which remains the principal source. As Mr. Troyer and others have noted, Dr. Wells had a fateful experience during his first year in North Carolina, an epiphany that forever committed him to the study of the plant communities of North Carolina and eastern North Carolina in particular. On a spring day in 1920 Dr. Wells was traveling on the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, en route from Raleigh

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to Wilmington. In Pender County, just north of Burgaw, the county seat, the railroad tracks bisected a vast wildflower meadow of some 1,500 acres that Dr. Wells named the Big Savannah. Mr. Troyer describes the scene:

He could hardly believe it. Spreading for half a mile before his eyes were wildflowers, a carpet of wildflowers over the treeless expanse of delicate green spring grass which mostly hid the black soil beneath. Even from the window of the railway car he recognized the myriad patches of white violets, the bright blue polka dots of irislike blooms, the nodding heads of what looked like white dandelions. But there were also flowers he did not know: huge golden goblets flung in groups on countless cloths of white fleabane, other tables set with glasses of red wine, still other whites, yellows, and blues, all strange and magnificent. The view across the car to the other side was the same and just as vast. As the leisurely train traversed this banquet of floral delights, he estimated its length at two miles. Incredible! At least fifteen hundred acres of wildflowers were thrusting up their multicolored beauty in a dazzling array. It was like a huge garden thickly planted on a well-kept lawn. But it was not planted, it was natural, a natural garden (Troyer, 6).

The memory of seeing the Big Savannah remained strong almost a half century later when in 1967 in an addendum for the reprint of *Natural Gardens* he described it as “probably the most beautiful wild flower garden in the eastern United States” (NGNC, 1967, xviii). Dr. Wells returned to the Big Savannah during two summers for extended field study, experiences that he recalled in 1967, which were never equaled in a long career. “As my memory goes back over the 46 years in North Carolina, the two summers of day after day on the Big Savannah continually surrounded by unsurpassed floral beauty while engaged in our technical soil studies stand out beyond everything else”(quoted in NGNC, 2002, 200).

The process of study that Dr. Wells applied to the Big Savannah, the first of the natural gardens of North Carolina he examined, served him well in the 1920s as he moved throughout North Carolina examining the plant communities that made up his adopted state. Appalled by the loss of the great native pine forests that once covered much of eastern North Carolina, Dr. Wells applied his energies outside the classroom to educating the citizens of North Carolina about the extraordinary botanical richness of the state. He was a tireless speaker to groups and civic associations and prolific contributor to both professional journals and general interest magazines. In this effort he had two important supporters: Susan Frank Iden (1885-1944), a reporter for the *Raleigh Times* from ca. 1920 to ca. 1933 (Troyer, 72) and Ethel May (Diffie) Tomlinson, the wife of Sidney Halstead Tomlinson (1876-1949), a wealthy High Point furniture manufacturer. In 1920 he and Miss Iden had joined together to mount a wildflower show held in the Olivia

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Raney Library on Hillsborough Street in Raleigh. Both women were members of the Garden Club of North Carolina, and Mrs. Tomlinson became president of the club in 1929.

Dr. Wells's growing interest in native plants and plant communities paralleled a like, widespread enthusiasm for native wildflowers held by members of the Garden Club of North Carolina and others throughout the nation. This shared appreciation was the genesis of *The Natural Gardens of North Carolina*. Dr. Wells's collaboration with Miss Iden on the 1920 wildflower show has been acknowledged as the first in a series on steps that led to the garden club's critical support of the book and its publication. It confirmed her respect for Dr. Wells, an admiration she would acknowledge through the 1920s and see to result in 1932. Another was a talk Dr. Wells prepared in conjunction with the Extension Division of North Carolina State College. Entitled "The Patch Work of North Carolina's Great Green Quilt," the lecture was illustrated by some 120 lantern slides that Dr. Wells had hand-tinted (and which form the core of a collection of some 500 slides made by Dr. Wells held in the North Carolina State University Libraries' Special Collections Research Center). The lecture was serialized in *North Carolina Agriculture and Industry*, a publication of the Extension Division, in 1924-25. Dr. Wells composed other talks, including "The Most Remarkable Plant Community in North Carolina: The Big Savannah," which gained him a devoted following among members of the Garden Club of North Carolina.

By January 1931 Dr. Wells had agreed to write a book that served his own ambitions to educate North Carolinians while also meeting those of Mrs. Tomlinson who had made the publication of a book on North Carolina wildflowers the "sole objective" of the garden club's conservation committee which she formed and chaired during her second term as president, 1930-31 (Troyer, 93). Three months later, on 21 April, Dr. Wells addressed the garden club; the title of his lecture was "The Natural Gardens of North Carolina." Miss Iden applauded the lecture and thought its title "would be a fetching title for the book" that the garden club voted to sponsor that day (Troyer, 97).

*The Natural Gardens of North Carolina* was published in late fall 1932. Dr. Wells signed the first 500 copies of the initial printing of 2,000 copies for the garden club on 11 and 14 December. Three hundred further copies were available in the first binding for the public and an additional 700 copies were bound in March 1933. The remaining 500 copies were bound in July 1934 (Troyer, 99-100). By 1942 all 2,000 copies had been sold and the book went out of print. Twenty-five years would pass before the University of North Carolina Press would reprint and reissue *The Natural Gardens of North Carolina* late in 1967. Meanwhile, during this long quarter-century, the book had proved extraordinarily influential, to a degree far beyond what these numbers and dates indicate. Dr. Wells had aptly described the genesis of *Natural Gardens* in a few short paragraphs for the preface.

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In recent years a new emphasis has appeared in the field of plant study, which involves the attempt to understand the plant in relation to its environment. It tries to answer such an important question as why plants grow where they do and the equally significant one of why they are not present when absent from an area. Organism and environment constitute the real whole, so that ecology, the science which deals with both in their relation to each other, is becoming increasingly valuable as a major science helping us to understand the world about us. In this study the ecological approach is emphasized.

The first part of this popular book dealing with our natural gardens is devoted to a general account of the vegetation and habitat of each of the eleven major plant communities of North Carolina. In the second part, an original artificial key to the herbaceous wildflower plants of the state, is presented accompanied by description of the genera and important species. Though fully aware of the difficulties involved, the author has initiated the key on the ecological basis previously mentioned. Thus, all of the savannah or grass-sedge bog wild flowers, for example, are treated together, and the fresh water marsh species, in another place. Approximately two-thirds of the wild flowers fall into the "great forest" group, which involves most of the state since the well-drained upland habitat is determining here. For key purposes the eleven major communities have been condensed to seven.

The writer has always believed that a popular account of vegetation systematically considered, should be an introduction to the professional manuals and not a mere repetition of these. Hence technicalities of all kinds have been avoided so far as possible. The emphasis is upon the genus or group of related species or kinds of plants. . . . It has been our aim to assist the amateur plant lover to learn the common names of the herbaceous wild flowers of North Carolina, most of which are recognized by a genus common name. (NGNC, 1967, vii-viii).

Jonathan Daniels, in his review in *The News and Observer*, on Christmas Day 1932, articulated the qualities that characterize Dr. Wells's surpassing achievement.

With the rarest ability in translating a scientific enthusiasm into a graceful and popular book, Dr. B. W. Wells, head of the Department of Botany at State College, has written in "The Natural Gardens of North Carolina" an excellent description of the native vegetation of North Carolina. Any North Carolinian will find Dr. Wells' story of North Carolina plant life interesting and every gardener

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and amateur botanist will be delighted with his easily understandable manual of the wild flowers of the State.

Across the amazing variety of native flora, Dr. Wells carries his reader from sea oats to rhododendron in a matter (sic) which, without ever becoming unscientific, is never heavy with an air of learning. Dr. Wells divides the State into eleven major plant communities and describes the plant life in each. Beginning his descriptions of the natural gardens of the State with the sand dune and upland sea community, he moves westward through salt marsh and fresh water marsh, swamp forest and swamp aquatic plants, shrub-bog or pocosin, grass-sedge bog or savannah, sandhill, old field community, and great forest, to the high mountain forests of the extreme west. In each area he describes the growth of flowers and trees with a spirit of enthusiasm which is not only scientific but often poetic.

In this consideration Dr. Wells has made "a new approach to the study of the vegetation of a region." Instead of prosaically cataloguing descriptions of plants, he has undertaken to show the plant relation to its environment.

Altogether both in its literary and its scientific character, Dr. Wells has written an excellent book and one which should be on the shelves of every North Carolinian who loves to dig in the earth or who takes joy in the liveliness which grows out of the earth of his State.

When *The Natural Gardens of North Carolina* is compared against the vast number of similar or related works on ecology and wildflowers published between its original appearance in 1932 and its reprinting thirty-five years later in 1967, its remarkable, timeless character becomes self-evident. *The Natural Gardens of North Carolina* is a pioneering work of its period, the single great book of a brilliant man. When pressed to revise it in the middle years of the century he would not. His refusal was couched in the matter of time, but one can easily suspect he understood the seminal value of *Natural Gardens* without giving voice to a claim that could too easily be taken for arrogance.

In the late summer of 1967, while resident here at Rock Cliff Farm, Dr. Wells made few alterations to the work, noting in a two-and-a-half page "Addendum," dated September 1967, that "no change has been made except the elimination of a few paragraphs from the Preface and Introduction" (NGNC, 1967, xvii). However, he did take the opportunity to lament the great loss to North Carolina of what was arguably the most important of its "natural gardens," the Big Savannah.

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This 1,500 acre area was probably the most beautiful wild flower garden in the eastern United States. An attempt was made to have it become a state park and a tourist attraction. Officers of the State Garden Club and the author made an appeal to a legislative finance committee to purchase the area. The tourist potential at that time had not been recognized and the fact that to maintain it in prime condition involved burning over the area every winter were against the project, even though herbaceous fires may easily be controlled.

The discovery of how to farm this land, long regarded as nonagricultural, was made by a truck grower. He dragged the deeply plowed soil into ridges high enough to keep the roots alive on this normally poorly drained area. Recently (summer of 1967) the larger half, 800 acres, was found planted in corn, making it one of the largest corn fields in the state. (NGNC, 1967, xviii-xix).

*The Natural Gardens of North Carolina*, having gone out of print in 1942, found a new, wider, and appreciative audience when it was reprinted in November 1967. The reprint, issued when Dr. Wells was eighty-three years of age, rekindled his prominence as the leading interpreter of the North Carolina landscape. Dr. Wells welcomed the attentions of a new generation of readers as he continued his study and advocacy of horticultural and ecological concerns. He also continued with his painting, capturing the buildings and grounds of Rock Cliff Farm through its seasons. Within the space of about three years the 1967 printing was sold out, and in August 1971 the University of North Carolina Press issued a third printing. These two printings and their readership played a critical role in nurturing a rising environmental awareness in North Carolina.

*The Natural Gardens of North Carolina* enjoyed a fourth printing in May 1979, six months after the death of Dr. Wells in December 1978. By this time, as Lawrence S. Earley has written, "he was one of the most revered ecologists of his generation, and one of the most influential--especially in his adopted state of North Carolina" (NGNC, 2002, xv). In ways both direct and indirect the development of a broad and significant conservation movement in North Carolina and the success of land and nature conservancies here can be traced to Bertram Whittier Wells and his profound regard for North Carolina that appears on page after page of *The Natural Gardens of North Carolina*.

In 2002, on the seventieth anniversary of its original publication, the University of North Carolina Press reissued the revised book in both hardback and paper-cover editions. Lawrence S. Earley, the distinguished naturalist, editor, and historian provided both a new introduction and an afterword that place both Dr. Wells and his *Natural Gardens* in context. In the opening paragraph of his introduction, "The Life and Work of B. W. Wells," he eloquently describes the

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significance of *The Natural Gardens of North Carolina* and, by inference, the achievement of its writer.

On the small shelf of classic texts on the natural history of North Carolina, B. W. Wells's *The Natural Gardens of North Carolina* keeps company with such eighteenth-century evergreens as John Lawson's *A New Voyage to Carolina*, Mark Catesby's *Natural History of Florida, Carolina and the Bahama Islands*, and William Bartram's *Travels*. Unlike them, *The Natural Gardens* is still an astonishingly useful guide. Indeed, as students of the state have known for decades, when it comes to understanding North Carolina's landscape, there is still only one book to read and learn from. It is *The Natural Gardens* (NGNC, 2002, xi).

*The Natural Gardens of North Carolina* was a singular achievement, one book by a man that was understood to be important when first published in 1932, and a book whose significance has held through successive generations to the present. In that regard it shares company with another classic work written by a Raleigh author and published by the University of North Carolina Press, Elizabeth Lawrence's *A Southern Garden*, issued in 1942. Both were part of a larger flowering of interest in the natural and plant world in North Carolina in the first half of the twentieth century. The authors of both books were leading figures among a contemporary group of professional writers, botanists, and ecologists in the state, all of whom made important contributions. William Chambers Coker (1872-1953), a senior member of this group and a son of the wealthy and distinguished South Carolina family, came to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as a professor of botany in 1902 and remained a professor until retiring in 1945 (see Baldwin-Coker Cottage, NR, 2003). During this period he, like Dr. Wells, was a prolific writer and contributor to professional journals while also serving as editor from 1904 to 1945 of the *Journal of the Elisha Mitchell Scientific Society*, which also published scholarly articles by Dr. Wells. Dr. Coker established the Coker Arboretum on the university grounds, and he was a founder of the Highlands Biological Station. With Henry Roland Totten he wrote *The Trees of North Carolina* (1916) which they expanded into *Trees of the Southeastern States* of 1934. Dr. Totten (1892-1974) succeeded Dr. Coker as director of the Coker Arboretum and he was a founder of the North Carolina Botanical Garden, Chapel Hill, where the Totten Center bears his name. Herbert Hutchinson Brimley (1861-1946), the curator of the North Carolina State Museum, together with Clement Samuel Brimley (1863-1946) and Thomas Gilbert Pearson (1873-1943), coauthored *The Birds of North Carolina*, published in 1919 and reissued in 1942. Charlotte Hilton Green (1889-1992) adopted North Carolina (and Raleigh), as did Dr. Wells, in 1920 and in 1932 she launched a column "Out-of-Doors-in-Carolina" that she continued for forty-two years. Her *Birds of the South* was published in 1933 and reprinted in 1975 and 1999. Like Edna Metz Wells, Charlotte Hilton Green was honored in the naming of a city park in the

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Raleigh Park System. Hugo Leander Blomquist (1888-1964), a professor of botany at Duke University, was the author of *Ferns of North Carolina* (1934) and *The Grasses of North Carolina* (1948), and the co-author of *Flowers of the South* (1953). A final, as yet little-heralded member of this community was Dr. Thomas Grant Harbison (1862-1936), a native of Pennsylvania who made Highlands his home. He was a collector for the Biltmore Herbarium, established by George Washington Vanderbilt, from 1897 until 1905, served as a plant collector and field agent for Dr. Charles Sprague Sargent and the Arnold Arboretum from 1905 to 1926, and in 1933 he came to Chapel Hill where in 1934 he was appointed curator of the University of North Carolina Herbarium founded in 1908 by Dr. Coker, his long-time friend and colleague. All of these men and women encouraged the study of nature and the natural world of North Carolina and published in their respective fields; however, it was Bertram Whittier Wells's great fortune to produce a landmark work among their efforts.

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

UTM reference 5: 17 711740 3986070

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated acreage of Rock Cliff Farm is delineated on the enclosed map of the property prepared by Cawthorne, Moss and Panciera, P. C., of Wake Forest, in 2006. The map is on a scale of one inch equals 200 feet. Because this property is part of a much larger holding of the United States of America there is no existing tax map available.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes all of the contiguous residual acreage of Rock Cliff Farm, purchased by B. W. Wells in 1950, that lies above the mean lake level of Falls Lake. This comprises approximately 83.442 acres of the farm's original 144.20 acres.

PROPERTY OWNER:

Colonel John E. Pulliam  
District Engineer  
Wilmington District  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
P.O. Box 1890  
Wilmington, N.C. 28402-1890  
Telephone: 910/251-4624

LONG-TERM LEASEHOLDER:

Mr. Lewis Ledford, Director  
Division of State Parks and Recreation  
Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
1615 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, N.C. 27699-1615  
Telephone: 919/715-8710

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Photography Schedule

The following applies to all photographs except views E. and F., which were black and white photographs made by Davyd Foard Hood on 25 August and 27 July 2005, respectively, and the negatives are at the North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, NC

1. Name of property: Rock Cliff Farm
2. Location of property: Wake County, North Carolina
3. Name of photographer: Hughen H. E. Nourse
4. Date of photographs: 3 January 2007.
5. Location of original digital photographs: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, NC
  - A. Overall view, looking east, with Ray-Wells House (#2) and Meathouse (#3)  
NC\_WakeCounty\_RockCliffFarmA\_01
  - B. View along farm approach road, looking west/northwest, with Ray House (#8) and Ray House Outbuilding (#9). NC\_WakeCounty\_RockCliffFarmB\_02
  - C. Landscape view, looking west, to Ray-Wells House (#2).  
NC\_WakeCounty\_RockCliffFarmC\_03
  - D. Ray Wells House (#2), looking northeast. NC\_WakeCounty\_RockCliffFarmD\_04
  - E. Ray-Wells House stair, looking southwest in hall.
  - F. Ray-Wells House, view, looking southeast, in kitchen.
  - G. Meathouse (#3), looking south/southwest. NC\_WakeCounty\_RockCliffFarmG\_05
  - H. Landscape view, looking north, with privy (#5), studio (#6), and Lowery-Ray Cemetery (#4) fence. NC\_WakeCounty\_RockCliffFarmH\_06
  - I. Lowery-Ray Cemetery (#4), looking east. NC\_WakeCounty\_RockCliffFarmI\_07
  - J. Studio (#6), looking northeast, with lumber rack (#7). NC\_WakeCounty\_RockCliffFarmJ\_08

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K. Ray House (#8), looking south/southwest. NC\_WakeCounty\_RockCliffFarmK\_09

L. Ray House Outbuilding (#9), looking north. NC\_WakeCounty\_RockCliffFarmL\_10